

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE WILLIAM J. PERRY  
REMARKS TO U.S. TROOPS AT CAMP ABLE SENTRY  
SKOPJE, FYROM, MACEDONIA  
JULY 19, 1994

Today is actually the second time that I've come to visit Camp Able Sentry. Unfortunately, the first time I spent two hours circling the skies overhead waiting for the fog to lift, and I never did make it. This time, the sun is smiling on us. We're going to have a beautiful day and I'm looking forward very much to meeting with the officials of the government here and also talking with the troops here at Camp Able Sentry and at OP 52.

I'm here because I want you to know how important I believe your mission is. It's important to me. It's important to America. Indeed, it's important to the entire world community.

In this post-Cold War era, we sometimes ask our forces to perform missions that are not easy to define. But your goal is simple -- it's to keep the peace by deterring aggression. Every peaceful day that passes is a tribute to your success.

You are helping deter the spread of a conflict. You are a real force for stability in a very unstable region. And your extraordinary professionalism and skill are models to the world.

In my job, I talk to my counterparts every week, that is the ministers of defense in countries all over the world. Every one of them who has seen and talked to our men and women in uniform tell me how much they envy the kind of people we have in our forces.

Your skill and your courage and your discipline are crucial to America's security. We saw that 50 years ago in Normandy, when young Americans risked their lives on D-Day to bring freedom to Europe. We saw that one year ago in Mogadishu, when our soldiers braved a fierce firefight to rescue comrades who were there to bring peace to a starving and desperate people. And I see it here today at Camp Able Sentry as you perform your difficult mission to bring stability to this troubled region.

I know that your job is not easy. Many of you have spouses and children back in Germany. But the job is very important. And you're carrying it out with great skill and dedication.

We simply cannot take our liberty for granted. Peace and security require constant vigilance and strong defenses. And we at home recognize the enormous price that you pay to protect our liberty, peace and security. You have volunteered to risk your lives so that others may live in peace and without fear.

There's a painting that hangs outside my office in the Pentagon. It depicts a poignant scene of a serviceman with his family in a church. Clearly he is praying before a deployment and a long separation from his family. Below the painting is a wonderful quote from Isaiah in which God says, "Whom shall I send and who will go for us?" And Isaiah replies, "Here am I; send me."

You, the men and the women of Task Force Able Sentry, answer this call every day. You say, "Here am I; send me."

And words cannot express the gratitude that I feel and which our nation feels for your service. You should be truly proud of your achievements. I can tell you that today – as I meet the enormously strong team of Task Force Able Sentry - dedicated, professional, competent enlisted folks, NCOs and officers – I am proud, truly proud, to be your Secretary of Defense.

Thank you.

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The Orlando Sentinel

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## Perry visits a pocket of peace

Associated Press

U.N. OBSERVATION POST  
52, Macedonia — Five white mobile trailers and a wooden observation tower perched in the middle of a field of shoulder-high corn have become a home away from home for a dozen U.S. Army soldiers keeping war at bay in tiny Macedonia.

"It's pretty easy duty, sir!" Sgt. Scott Culver of Virginia Beach, Va., told Defense Secretary William Perry, who was visiting the remote site. "We're glad to stay up here."

On a weeklong tour of Balkan hot spots, Perry arrived Tuesday to inspect the conditions under which 500 U.S. soldiers work as part of a 1,200-member U.N. observer force trying to ensure that the ethnic rivalries that have torn its northern neighbors don't spread to this country of nearly 2 million people.

"What you're doing here is important," Perry told the soldiers. "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, but in the Balkans, an ounce of prevention is worth a ton of cure."

Perry called Macedonia "key to the stability of the region."

"Every peaceful day that passes is a tribute to your success," he told soldiers earlier at their headquarters, 20 miles south in the city of Skopje.

Macedonia was the only former Yugoslav republic to withdraw peaceably from the Yugoslav federation. Bosnia to the north became engulfed in a war that's raged for two years. Landlocked Macedonia is surrounded by four unfriendly na-

tions and peppered with enough rivalries to start a similar conflict.

On 21-day rotations, soldiers at this rugged site monitor and patrol the border, which cuts across the country's only four-lane highway in a broad agricultural valley. A platoon leader, Sgt. Mel Parker of Amory, La., said the soldiers like being in the field, and their morale has been high.

"It's hard work filling sandbags or building helipads, but the observation post is home to them, so they don't mind working on it," Parker said.

The tedium of digging bunkers or keeping watch with night-vision scopes at the sandbagged site is eased by the air-conditioned trailers, stacks of videotapes, CD players and a weight room for body-building, he added.

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## GIs Take to Guard Duty On Macedonian Frontier

By John F. Harris  
Washington Post Staff Writer

SKOPJE, Macedonia, July 19—Each day the men of U.N. Observation Post 52 pick up their weapons and head out on patrol, but no one seems to find these soldiers very menacing. As often as not, they are greeted by ecstatic children, who are delighted to find the U.S. Army roaming their villages.

The observers were sent here by world leaders who viewed the boundary between Macedonia and Serbia as having the potential to ignite a whole new round of Balkan ethnic violence. The soldiers, though, say their own lives 300 yards from the border rarely are anxious and often are fairly pleasant.

"We thought it was going to be more tense than it is," said Sgt. Eustaquio Paraniaque, 28, of Hawaii.

"It's really pretty relaxed. All the kids scream 'Americans,' and they all want to follow us around."

Defense Secretary William J. Perry, on a week-long Balkans tour, reviewed the troops here today and met with Macedonian leaders. The practice of putting U.S. troops under U.N. control has come under increasing criticism in Congress, but Perry praised this operation, known as "Able Sentry," as a noble effort to prevent war.

"In this post-Cold War era, we sometimes ask our forces to perform missions that are not easy to define," Perry told the troops. "But your goal is simple—it's to keep the peace by deterring aggression."

There are about 500 U.S. troops stationed in Macedonia, on temporary duty from their posting in Germany. They make up about half of a U.N. force, which is under the command of Norwegian Brig. Gen. Trygve Tellefsen.

Although Macedonia has avoided the bloodshed of Bosnia, the landlocked nation of 2 million people has suffered from the ethnic rivalries that accompanied the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia. The international embargo of Serbia to the north has isolated Macedonia's economy.

And since February, Macedonia has been cut off from Greece to the south. Athens objected to this former Yugoslav republic taking the name Macedonia and emblazoning its flag with a 16-point star because

Greece says that both are Hellenic symbols. A phrase in the new Macedonian constitution about protecting Macedonians everywhere also has riled Greece, which has a large Macedonian population in its north.

Macedonian President Kiro Gligorov, in an interview, described the

standoff with Greece as "irrational" and said he asked Perry to tell Greek Prime Minister Andreas Papandreu that "there's nothing significant dividing us."

Gligorov warned that tensions in his country could start a "war of much greater consequences than the war in Bosnia," and complained that the United States—which has yet to dispatch an ambassador to Macedonia—and other nations prefer to pay little attention to what's something dramatic happening.

The most dramatic thing about Observation Post 52, about 20 miles north of Skopje, is the intimacy of

the operation. At any given time, a dozen American soldiers are stationed on 21-day rotations at the post, which is surrounded by cornfields and sits just off a highway that enters Serbia.

The Americans wear the blue berets of U.N. troops and live in mobile cabins. A white armored personnel carrier sits in the front yard, and an observation tower contains a missile apparatus—absent a missile—so the soldiers can use its high-powered scope.

Several soldiers said they prefer duty at the observation posts to the routine at the operation's Skopje headquarters. They cook their own meals, and the youngsters help pick weeds in exchange for a snack.

The cabins, though cramped, are air-conditioned, and the post has a VCR and four boxes of tapes.

Perry said he was worried about the possibility of accidental combat if either U.N. or Serbian troops unknowingly crossed the border. But Tellefsen and Lt. Col. John Baggott, the commander of the U.S. troops, said they met recently with Serb officials to clarify the precise border. He said the U.S. troops are equipped with Global Positioning Systems that use satellites to tell them exactly where they are.

Tellefsen said their deterrent value rests on being visible. "We are to be seen as often as possible," he said. "Day and night."